

THE
COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.
NEW SERIES.

WILLIAM B. FOWLE, EDITOR.

Vol. XIII.

BOSTON, APRIL 15, 1851.

No. 8.

OUR COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM. No. VI.

ANOTHER great defect in the school system of Massachusetts is its lack of energy, its stand-still character. In discussing the grounds on which a system of free, general education can be defended, the first Secretary of the Board of Education, after repudiating its advantages and even its necessity, in a republic where every man is an elector, and every one eligible to office; after showing its advantages in a pecuniary point of view, by proving that intelligence is the main spring of wealth; in fine, after demonstrating that, in a moral and economical point of view, it is the true policy of a people, and far superior to our alms-house and penitentiary system, which punish but do not prevent pauperism and crime; he comes to the conclusion that every child has a *right* to an education, and every community is bound to confer instruction upon every soul that is born under its control.

It is evident that this *right* has never been practically acknowledged, even in Massachusetts, and every one who has read the history of our schools, or who has watched the operation of our towns in regard to them, knows that the last thing which enters into the calculation of the assembled citizens on town meeting day, is the idea, that the children of the town have a natural claim upon the wealth of the community for a competent education. The noble founders of our free schools probably entertained no such idea, and acted rather in self-defence when, by teaching their children to read the Bible,

they made them the determined enemies of the hierarchy from which they had fled, and of that elder ecclesiastical strumpet which claimed to be its mother. The motives of the founders of our system were far less poetical than the Secretary's, their far-sighted wisdom saw the necessity of knowledge to a thriving, free and religious community, and they provided liberally for education. There can be no doubt that, in proportion to their means and their light, they did far more than their descendants have ever done for general education; and it is pretty clear that, instead of increasing the facilities and means of instruction, in proportion to our wealth and progress, we have rather scrimped the pattern of our fathers, but boasted as much as if we had fully carried out their glorious conception. A decent respect for this institution of the pilgrims has prevented the successive generations from abolishing it; but, plainly as we see the powerful influence of free schools, even when imperfectly conducted as they have always been, we have never been moved to try what would be their influence if they were made all that the accumulated wealth and experience of two centuries, and all that the light and ingenuity which the schools have created, might enable us to make them.

There has been no limitation to the right of towns to make their schools as good, as long, as numerous, as perfect in every respect as they pleased, but they have been contented if the schools of the children were as good as those their fathers enjoyed; and, instead of comparing their efforts with those of the most perfect system that they could imagine, they have compared them with the schools of the old world, or with the no-schools of some portions of the new world, and have sat down on their cushions of ease and thanked God that the lines have fallen to them in such pleasant places, without once thinking that their obligations have increased in proportion to their advantages, and that "much will be required of those to whom much is given."

By the ancient laws of the province, still in force, every town containing five hundred families, in addition to common district schools, was required to maintain a grammar school, by which is meant what we should now call a classical school, but this requirement has been almost entirely disregarded or evaded. English grammar was not studied in any of our free schools till towards the end of the last century, but the only "grammar schools" now known are those which teach English grammar. The English high school, required but lately by our laws, seems to have superseded the old grammar

school, but we should not grieve much over this circumstance, if the high schools abounded, as they would, if the law were faithfully executed. This, however, is not the case, and perhaps no one of the statutes has been so neglected or evaded as that requiring this higher grade of schools. In 1840, it was effectually abrogated by a legislative provision that any town adding twenty-five per cent. to the largest appropriation it had made previous to 1840, should be excused from establishing a high school. This was so misinterpreted that an addition of twenty-five per cent. required by the natural increase of population, and which must have been made had high schools still been required, was considered the twenty-five per cent. required by the statute, and few or no high schools were established for many years, although half a hundred towns had acquired the requisite number of inhabitants. This reluctance of the towns to improve their schools no doubt was a god-send to the academies and private schools, which will always thrive and abound in proportion to the neglect and inefficiency of the common schools, but the Board of Education did nothing to stop the evil, and it went on unredressed until 1848, when a committee of the Legislature, as we believe, at our instigation, proposed to repeal the amendment of 1840. But the law does not now stand as it did, for modifications have already been made, and others are proposed, not so much to increase the number of high schools as to break the force of the law. We do not bring it as a serious charge against our citizens, that they have been willing to let the high school supersede the technical "grammar school," for, we believe that, just so far as they substitute the study and *practice* of English for the study of Greek and Latin in our common schools, they obey the law of progress, and really improve upon the plan of the Elders, but we do charge them with willingness, at least, to shirk their obligations to the coming generation, which, if no better instructed than the present, must take a lower rank, and be satisfied with far less influence. The schools of New England have gone on without competition for almost two centuries, but the old world is waking up, and the schools of Prussia, and probably those of Scotland, are more thorough than the major part of ours. New England does not look to Massachusetts as she once did in regard to free schools; New York even pretends to superiority; the great Free States of the West are actively groping for the truth in this matter, and even the Slave States, notwithstanding the great disadvantage of a scattered population, have taken the bull by the horns as if in

earnest. Massachusetts, therefore, must rouse herself, or yield precedence to her rivals, and this, of course, must be fatal to her influence, it being evident that her territory can not grow beyond its present size, her wealth can not find employment for its increase, except by the increased intelligence of her citizens, and the influence of her opinions and her institutions must cease when other States have, or think they have, as good ones of their own.

We know it is claimed that more is taught in our common schools than was taught in our fathers' day, but we fear there is some self deception in this matter. It must be allowed that, if we judge only from the statute book, there is great appearance of progress; more is required, much more, but requiring more of a teacher whose qualifications remain the same, only embarrasses him, and, of course, by requiring more less is obtained. A large and long acquaintance with the schools and the teachers of New England has satisfied us that there is much self deception in the belief that by increasing the number of branches, without securing a supply of competent teachers, we have provided for the better education of our children, and made an advance beyond the position of our fathers. There can be no doubt that more, much more can be learned by our children than they now acquire in our common schools, but all attempts to teach the higher branches by the neglect of the *lower*, as the elementary studies are disparagingly called, (as if more solidity should not be given to the foundation in proportion to the increased height of the superstructure!) must be considered by the judicious, not as an advance beyond our fathers, but as an injury to the schools. We know not how well reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic were taught in the first century of New England's history, but we do know that they are taught very imperfectly now, and we believe the schools of New England would be greatly benefitted, if, for a year to come, nothing should be taught in them but enunciation and reading, drawing, spelling in connection with writing, and the first four rules of arithmetic.

There is apparatus enough connected with our school system, but it moves heavily, and few of the movers are acquainted with its power, or know how to guide its operations. Every member of the Board of Education should be a practical teacher, up with the times, and interested in no school but the common schools. The idea of making membership an honor and not a labor should be abandoned, and *ex officio* members, that is, members *by accident*, should be dispensed with. We

saw enough of this when the Aldermen of Boston were *ex officio* members of the school committee, and were in the way of the committee proper, though rather to be pitied than blamed for the exposure to which they were subjected. Spasmodic movements of the Board, or of a few lecturers, were the lecturers what they ought to be, men at home in the school-room, will not elevate the schools to the desired standard in a century. If the Secretary of the Board finds that he has need of helpers, let a Board of at least one to a county be appointed, each a teacher, and an able, practical lecturer; let them all work, all the time, if necessary, and let them be well paid for so doing. Such a Board, with some actual acquaintance with the schools, the teachers, the committees, the whole State, might be of some assistance to the Secretary; but it is evident that the Board, though always composed of highly respectable gentlemen, are ciphers on the left hand of the Secretary, and have always been so, as records and their Reports abundantly show.

If a proper spirit actuated the people of this State, they would rise in their power and do more in one year than they are now likely to do in the average term of human life. We want teachers, and why do we not have them? If we wanted lawyers, ministers, mechanics, laborers, or even soldiers, we have them on the only ground that will bring them, viz., *paying for them*. We can have as many and as good teachers as we need on this condition; but the towns and districts are backward and mean in their appropriations, and the State allows them to continue so, instead of at once furnishing the means, or requiring the towns to do so. The knowledge of the State is its true wealth and power, and the worst waste is that which allows a generation to pass through the schools, as it does every few years, with less than a tithe of the useful knowledge and moral instruction that it needs, and that may be as well imparted as not. But, bad as our system is, and poorly as it is managed, it is a glaring fact, and always has been, that its operation is in a high degree unequal and unjust. As we have not room to consider this position in the present number, we shall reserve our observations for the next.

The memory of man is a net which holdeth great things and letteth small ones go through.—*Solon*.

It is folly to remember that by which we forget ourselves.

OUR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL-HOUSES.

[We are glad to receive the following communication, because it is time for those who have experience and ability to speak out and demand progress. Any one who reads only the public documents, and newspaper notices of our schools and school system, would be led to think that we had reached the *ne plus ultra*, and can advance no farther. Beyond the Pillars of Hercules lay a new and undiscovered world, and there it would have lain, had not Columbus dared to dissent from the Boards of Education and School Committees of his day, and to follow the light which his contemporaries supposed to be extinguished, because they could not see it any longer. ED.]

MR. EDITOR,—They who know how early I became a missionary of education in New England, and how much and how earnestly I have labored for the improvement of schools and school-houses, can best judge how much pleasure it gives me to find, in almost all parts of our Commonwealth,—I might say through the whole length and breadth of the land,—so much to praise, and so little to condemn; so much, in short, of the spirit of progress.

To begin with school-houses. Twenty-five years ago, a good school-house, out of some large town or city, was hardly to be found. Now, it is almost as rare to find a poor one. Some few of them, whether we speak of location and external appearances, or of their interior, are absolutely beautiful, and almost all are tolerable. A part of them could hardly be distinguished, by the passing stranger, from churches.

I have not only noted our school-houses, externally and internally, but the materials, methods, and spirit of instruction; and this not merely for a few years, but for almost half a century. Probably I have visited more common schools, during the last thirty-five years, than any other person in the United States. You will therefore allow and expect me to speak freely on this great subject.

You have seen my willingness to admit that, as a whole, we are making progress. Still, we are not doing all that we might do, nor all that, with our means, we ought to do. We have made a beginning, but I sometimes think it is little more than a beginning; for, is it not a scriptural rule that, "to whom much is given, of the same will much be required?" And to whom has more been given than to Massachusetts?

I will notice two or three among many things in which we might do more than we are doing. We should act wisely in concentrating an influence, more than we have ever yet done, on the public, or common schools, and leaving the other schools to take care of themselves. I would not say, with some, that they are doing harm, and ought to be put down; but only that the same amount of effort expended in another direction would do more good.

I visited a township of this Commonwealth in February last, where the people are as yet accustomed to continue the public schools for only a small part of the year. They seem to think they can not afford it. Then their school-houses, in many instances, are bad. One I found which is sometimes occupied by seventy scholars, which was not a whit too large for thirty, nor was its interior arrangement fit for any thing but a jail; and yet, some of the proprietors of the school send their older sons away to private schools, at an expense of about \$200 a year, although they have a very good academy of their own in the centre of the town. Solomon says, "There is that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty;" and, in the matter before us, I can not help thinking so.

But we might do much better than we are doing, if we had a few Howards or Dixes to go from school-room to school-room, as missionaries, and not merely look at the outside of things, as foreign travellers too often do, but explore deeply the true state of things, physically, morally, and intellectually. They should not only tell parents and others, in learned lectures, what ought to be done, but put forth their own hands and do it. Our Teachers' Institutes, as well as many more of the varied and varying portions of our modern educational machinery, are doing much; but do we not, in too many instances, shoot over the heads of those to whom we direct our lessons of instruction?

The normal school, also, might do more than it has ever yet done for us. It might make our teachers more practical, rather than less so. It might also make them more thorough. I do not mean to say, in this connection, that the normal school, in this country, has been thus far a failure, for it is not so. All I say,—and I repeat the statement,—is, that it ought to do much more for us than it has hitherto done. It ought not to be a place for making or manufacturing teachers, but only for planing and polishing those who are already made.

Yours, truly,

W. A. A.

West Newton, March 22, 1851.

A PRAYER.

BY ELIZABETH M. SARGEANT.

If I have erred in groping for the light,
That streameth from the far-off golden portals,
Chasing the shadows from the guilty night,
That broodeth o'er the tribe of erring mortals ;—
If I have grasped at shadowy forms and fair
That flit in wildering grace above, around me,
Thinking the true, the right, the good were there,
Nor sought to break the spell in which they bound me,
Father ! forgive me.

If I have ever found a bitter tear,
Coursing down cheeks with sin or sorrow paling,
And left no ray of joy to picture there
Prismatic glory through the grief-drops falling ;—
If I have heard amid life's human choir,
One tone with sorrow's unmistakable quiver,
And touched all carelessly the answering lyre,
Causing sweet strings at the rude touch to shiver,
Father ! forgive me.

If I have ever turned with withering scorn
To censure ill, mistaken or designing,
And drank not patiently the bitter cup
Which Thou in love hast proffered, unrepining ;—
If I have learned not from earth's Holiest One
To bear its thousand ills, its wrongs, its sorrows,
As but the darkness fleeing from the day,
The dusky herald of a glorious morrow,
Father ! forgive me

And oh ! if I have ever caused a sigh,
In any heart my own has loved to cherish,
Among the hopes of immortality
Unwithering joys when all around shall perish ;
Forgive me this ;—for all unwittingly
Was every thoughtless deed, each light word spoken ;
Time, care, may dim the eyes we love to see,
But tears, which we bid flow, tell of deep fountains broken,
Father ! forgive me.

The true teacher seeks such discipline as will elevate his pupils and induce self-government. He who brings all offences to the rod, is like the physician who brings all diseases to mercury ; he may drive out the immediate devil, but he only goes to bring back seven others worse than himself.

FAMILIAR KNOWLEDGE.

A Guide to the Scientific Knowledge of Things Familiar, by Rev. Dr. BREWER. Carefully revised and adapted to the Schools of the United States. New York, C. S. FRANCIS & Co., 1851. pp. 426. 18mo.

[We recommend the above-mentioned little work to teachers, as containing much of that useful knowledge which ought to be taught in our schools, and as containing many thousand texts from which the enterprising teacher may give familiar lectures, or, as some call them, general exercises, to his pupils. It has been objected to such exercises, that there is nothing systematic in them, and this is generally true, though we do not see why a competent teacher may not give a regular and even scientific course of such exercises. At any rate, the introduction of such an exercise for a few minutes, on proper occasions, can do no harm, and has a tendency to relieve the regular course of study as much as the singing of a song does; and, if the pupils are allowed to give their opinions freely, the exercise will be very useful in a grammatical point of view, it being a notorious fact, that the conversational powers of children are seldom tested in our best schools. We select a portion of one of the chapters as a specimen of the work. Ed.]

CHAPTER V.

SMOKE.

Q. Why does *smoke ascend* the chimney?

A. Because the air of the room (when it passes over the fire) becomes lighter for being *heated*; and (being thus made *lighter*) ascends the chimney, carrying the smoke with it.

Q. What is *smoke*?

A. Small particles of carbon, separated by combustion from the fuel, but not *consumed*.

Q. Why do *smoke* and steam *curl* as they ascend?

A. Because they are pushed round and round by the ascending and descending currents of air.

Q. Why does a *close stove draw* up more fiercely than an *open grate*?

A. Because the air which supplies the stove must pass *through the fire*; and, as it becomes exceedingly *heated*, rushes up the flue with great violence.

Q. What produces the *roaring* noise made by the fire in a close stove ?

A. Air rushing rapidly through the crevices of the *iron door*, and up the *chimney flue*.

Q. Why is the *roar less* if the stove *door* be thrown *open* ?

A. Because *fresh air* gets access to the fire *more easily* ; and, as the air is not so intensely heated, its motion is not so *violent*.

Q. Why do some *chimneys smoke* ?

A. Because fresh air is not admitted into a room *so fast as it is consumed by the fire* ; in consequence of which, a current of air *rushes down the chimney to supply the deficiency*, driving the smoke along with it.

Q. Explain this by an illustration.

A. If water be taken with a pail out of a river, *other water* will rush toward the hole as soon as the pail is lifted out ; and, if air be taken from a room (as it is, when some of it goes up the chimney), *other air* will rush toward the void to fill it up.

Q. Why will the air come down the *chimney* ?

A. Because it can get into the room in no *other way*, if the doors and windows are all made *air-tight*.

Q. What is the best *remedy* in such a case ?

A. The *speediest* remedy is to open the door or window : but by far the *best* remedy is to carry a small tube from the hearth into the external air.

Q. Why is that the *best* remedy ?

A. Because the fire will be plentifully supplied with air by the tube : the doors and windows may all remain air-tight ; and we may enjoy a warm fireside, without the inconvenience of draughts and cold feet.

Q. Why is a *chimney* raised so high above the *roof* ?

A. That it may not smoke ; as all funnels do which are too short.

Q. What is meant by the *funnel* or *flue* of a chimney ?

A. That part of a chimney through which the *smoke passes*.

Q. Why does a *chimney smoke* if the flue be very short ?

A. Because the *draught* of a short flue is *too slack* to carry the smoke up the chimney.

Q. Why is the *draught* of a *short flue* more *slack* than that of a long one ?

A. 1st—Because the *fire is always dull and sluggish*, if the chimney be too short :

2dly—Because the smoke rolls *out* of the chimney, before it has acquired its *full velocity* ; and

3dly—Because the wind, rain, and air, have more influence over a *short* funnel, than over a *long* one.*

Q. On what does the *intensity* of fire depend?

A. The *intensity* of fire is always in proportion to the *quantity of oxygen* with which it is supplied.

Q. Why does not *smoke* acquire its full *velocity* in a *short* funnel?

A. Because the *higher* smoke ascends in a flue, (provided the flue be clear and hot,) the *faster* it goes: if, therefore, a *funnel be very short*, the smoke never acquires its full velocity.

Q. Does the *draught* of a chimney depend on the *speed* of the *smoke* through the flue?

A. Yes. The more quickly *hot* air flies *up the chimney*, the more quickly *cold* air will rush *toward the fire* to supply the place; and, therefore, the *longer the flue*, the *greater the draught*.

Q. Why are the *chimneys* of *manufactories* made so very *long*?

A. To increase the intensity of the fire.†

Q. Why is the *intensity* of a fire increased by *lengthening* the *flue*?

A. Because the draught being greater, more fuel is consumed in the same time; and, of course, the intensity of the heat is proportionally greater.

Q. If a *short chimney* can not be lengthened, what is the best *remedy* to prevent smoking?

A. To *contract the opening* of the chimney contiguous to the stove.

Q. Why will a *smaller opening* against the stove *prevent* the chimney's *smoking*?

A. Because the air will be compelled to pass *nearer the fire*; and (being more *heated*) will rise through the chimney more rapidly. This *increase of heat* will therefore compensate for the *shortness* of the flue.

Q. Why will a *chimney smoke* if the *door* and *stove* are both on the *same side*?

A. Because (whenever the door is opened) a current of air will *blow obliquely into the chimney-place*, and drive the smoke into the room.

Q. What *remedy* can be applied to this evil?

* Because the air is more dense, and, of course, heavier, the nearer it is to the earth. [Ed.]

† At their top the air is rare, or thin and light, and more easily pushed aside by the ascending heated air and smoke. [Ed.]

A. The door must be set *opposite* to the chimney-place, or nearly so; and then the draught from the door *will blow the smoke up the chimney*, and not into the room.

Q. Why will a *chimney smoke* if it *needs sweeping*?

A. Because loose soot obstructs the free passage of the smoke, delays its current, and prevents the draught.

Q. Why will a *chimney smoke* if it be *out of repair*?

A. 1st—Because the *loose mortar and bricks* obstruct the smoke; and

2dly—*Cold air* (oozing through the chinks) *chills the air in the chimney*, and prevents its ascent.

Q. Why will a *stove smoke* if the joints of the flue do not fit air-tight?

A. Because *cold air* (oozing through the joints) *chills the air in the flue*, and prevents its ascent.

Q. Why does an old-fashioned *farm chimney-place* generally smoke?

A. Because the opening is so *very large*, that much of the air which goes up the chimney *has never passed near the fire*; and this *cold air* (mixing with the hot) so *reduces its temperature* that it ascends very slowly, and the draught is destroyed.

Q. Why does a chimney smoke if the *draught* be *slack*?

A. Because the current of air up the chimney is not powerful enough to *buoy up the smoke* through the flue.

Q. If the opening of a chimney be *too large*, what *remedy* can be applied?

A. The chimney-place must be contracted.

Q. Why will *contracting* the chimney-place *prevent its smoking*?

A. Because the air will then pass *nearer the fire*; and (being *more heated*) fly faster up the chimney.

Q. Why do almost all *chimneys smoke* in *gusty* weather?

A. Because the column of smoke is suddenly chilled by the wind, and (being unable to ascend) rushes back into the room.

Q. What is the use of a *chimney-pot*?

A. It serves to increase the draught, when the opening of a chimney is *too large*.

Q. How does a *chimney-pot* increase the *draught* of a chimney?

A. As the *same quantity* of hot air has to escape through a *smaller opening*, it must pass through more quickly.

Q. Why do *blowers* help to get a fire up?

A. Because they compel the air to go *through* the fire, and

not *over* it; in consequence of which, the fire is well supplied with oxygen, and the draught greatly increased.

Q. Why does a *blower* increase the draught?

A. Because the air (by passing *through* the fire) is made much hotter, and ascends the chimney more rapidly.

Q. Why is a fire better supplied with oxygen while the blower hangs before it?

A. Because the blower increases the draught; and the faster the *hot* air flies *up the chimney*, the faster will *cold* air rush *toward the fire*, to supply it with oxygen.

TWELVE DESIDERATA.—[COMMUNICATED.]

An interest in the charity that never faileth.

Spoils taken from children whom the rod has spared.

Portraits of the "Blue Bells (*Blue-stockings?*) of Scotland."

A light from the lamp of *Greece*.

A few inches of the Golden Rule.

Some sparks of the mouse that burned.

The cheese from which the widow's mites were taken.

The latch of the strait gate.

A few joints of the "*Tale of a Tub*."

Five minutes of past or future time, in any mood.

A slice of the bacon that every man has saved.

A glance from the *Miss* that is as good as a mile.

FINISHED EDUCATION.

Many of our youth of both sexes feel that their education is finished when their school days are over. No idea can be more destructive to the progress of true improvement. Our education is never finished till we are in our graves. The discipline acquired in college or in school is given to us only that we may be better able afterwards to educate ourselves. We have only then crossed the threshold of a course of improvement that must last us our lifetime. Such discipline is

important ; indeed, is absolutely essential, to start us aright in the life-toil before us ; but to suppose that it completes all that must be done for our intellectual or moral welfare, is absurd. The best part of a man's education is then to come, and upon the manner in which each one uses for himself the arrangements made for him in his early life, will depend the character of his future. Much, too, is said about man's mind having reached maturity, and that he needs no more discipline or education. A false idea, productive of much mischief to real mental improvement. There is no period, in the history of the mind, in which it is incapable of any farther progress, as long as the body retains its health. No man, who has lived to the age of sixty, in the constant employment of his mental faculties, but sees that he is every day acquiring greater powers, a greater control over what he knows, and an accumulation of new ideas. *It is never too late in life to learn.*

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE BRAIN.

[Extracted from the Key to Fowle's Physiological Diagrams, lately published.]

The substance of the nerves is soft and pulpy, and requires a sheath to prevent its flowing away. The nerves thus constructed appear like small flattened or round cords, one end of which is connected with the brain or spinal cord, and the other divided into many small threads, and distributed to every part of the body.

The true structure of the brain and nervous system, and their connection with the mind, are not yet fully understood, but late researches have thrown much light upon the subject, and suggested many improved methods of treating, both the mind and its organ. In our Saviour's time, the insane were supposed to be possessed by demons, and so far from being objects of compassion, as at the present day, they were usually abandoned by their nearest relations, and driven out to perish in the wilderness. In more modern times, even down to the beginning of this century, insanity was supposed to be a disease of the mind, and none but mental remedies were applied. The priest officiated as often as the physician, and armed with a bell, a Bible and a lighted candle, he disturbed

the rest of the poor maniac, and, in the expectation of frightening away the evil spirit, he often drove out the suffering spirit, whose malady he had mistaken.

If the physician was called in, he carried no apothecary with him, as in ordinary diseases, but he was often accompanied by musicians, who, under his direction, attempted to charm away the evil spirit, and give repose to the sufferer by attracting the attention of his tormentor. In our own day, what cruelty has not been inflicted upon the insane, under the mistaken idea that, because the mind was deranged, the body did not feel.

Phrenology, or the controversies that arose in regard to it, first taught that the true way to rectify the intellect, is to restore soundness to the brain, this organ being intimately connected with the body, and deranged by the same causes which derange other parts of the frame, this derangement causing insanity, and not being caused by it. Hence, we learn the great importance of physiological knowledge, that by due care the brain may be kept healthy, and in a fit condition to be used by the mind.

That the brain is the peculiar organ of the mind is proved by the fact that every limb of the body may be cut off, and yet, if the brain continue untouched, the mind will continue to act. All those avenues to the mind, called the senses, may be closed, as in the cases of Julia Brace, Laura Bridgman, and Oliver Caswell, and the mind, though imprisoned, not be deprived of any of its propensities, sentiments or faculties. But, on the other hand, if all the limbs are sound, and all the senses perfect, and the brain be taken away, the mind, no longer able to use it, or to find a substitute in the senses, the limbs, or the vital organs, as they are called, retires and produces that separation of mind and body which we call death.

If the mind, then, can only act through the instrumentality of the brain, the importance of a correct knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the brain, and its connection with the body, can not be overrated.

Various theories of the manner in which the mind operates by the brain have been proposed, but only two deserve any notice. The first, which has prevailed for centuries, and is still generally adopted, supposes the brain to be one organ, like the heart or the lungs, to be all used in every operation of the mind, as the lungs are in the act of breathing, or the heart in each propulsion of blood.


The other theory maintains that the mass which is called the brain, is a collection of many organs, and each faculty of the

mind uses a particular portion of the brain in every mental act and that portion only. The old theory maintains that as each faculty uses the whole brain, each faculty may become equally powerful, and only needs cultivation, or an act of the will, to become so. The new theory maintains that the comparative power of the several faculties depends upon the proportion of brain that they severally use.

To prove the old theory, its friends assert that, if each faculty had an organ, these organs could be distinguished from each other, and the brain would not appear, as it does, to be as much a single organ as any other of the body. To prove the new theory, its friends maintain, that no other single organ in the body performs two different functions, the heart only circulating blood, the lungs only purifying it, the liver secreting bile, the stomach digesting food, &c.; and they deny that the brain can do two opposite things, for digestion and circulation are not more different than loving and hating, fear and courage, hope and memory. Moreover, they contend that, if the whole brain could do two different things, it could not do them both at a time, whereas, on the new theory, every faculty can act independently of the rest, and any number can act at the same time.

They, moreover, maintain that, if the brain were a single organ, a person insane in one point would be insane in all, which is very rarely, if ever the case. We give the leading arguments and leave every one to form his own conclusions, for, fortunately, it happens, that the remarks we have to make in regard to the management of the brain are equally applicable to both theories.

[To be continued.]

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A. FORBES, Printer, No. 37 Cornhill, Boston.